

Antonín Dvořák, the Piano Duet and Nationalism

By

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Qichen Jiang

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Antonín Dvořák, the Piano Duet and Nationalism

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## **Abstract**

In this document, I will focus on two main topics: the piano duet and nationalism as shown in Antonín Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* Op.46. I will describe stylistic features of writing in them with discussions of the main pedagogical points.

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I feel blessed to have friends in various fields from different parts of the world. Among them, my special thanks to my duet partner, Heekyung Choi who worked with me for the performance of Antonín Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*, Op.46.

Special thanks go to:

- My parents, for their deep and unconditional love and support, which always shines through my life journey.
- The many role models around me that have helped me develop my values and efforts

Last, but most importantly, I want to send my deepest gratitude to my grandma and grandpa who are in heaven. Their immortal love and spirit has shaped my positive attitude towards life.

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## Introduction

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) was a distinguished Czech composer. As a representative of nineteenth century nationalism, his life-long passion was Czech national folk tradition and culture. Dvořák composed for most art music genres, including chamber music, symphony, concerto, opera, religious works, vocal music, and instrumental music. Dvořák's compositions for piano are less played today. However, he made great contributions to the repertory of the piano duet. It was the two series of *Slavonic Dances* Op.46 (1878) and Op.72 (1886) for piano duet with later orchestral arrangements by composer, each of them consisting of eight numbers, which brought him international fame. The volumes contain versions of such Czech folk dance forms as furiant, dumka, polka, sousedská, and skočná.,

The history of the piano duet began in the late eighteenth century with J.C Bach, Mozart and their contemporaries. Originally, duet playing, along with chamber music, was designed for an intimate home setting for the enjoyment of the performers and a few listeners. Technical difficulties are often not as challenging as those in the solo piano repertoire and the works themselves tend to be shorter and less complex. Duet playing offers opportunities for musicians ranging from engaged amateurs to professionals. Many masters composed for this genre, including Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Chopin, Fauré, Debussy, Grieg, and Dvořák.

Piano duet literature has not always been valued as highly as that of piano solo. Based on my own piano duet (four-hands) and piano duo (two-piano) experience, this is unfortunate. I enjoy the companionship and shared creativity of working with a partner. The piano duet



literature has a broad repertoire. It is worthwhile to introduce its riches to students and audiences.

# Antonín Dvořák, the Piano Duet and Nationalism

## Chapter I Dvořák and Nationalism

### Part I Biography

Antonín Dvořák was born on September 8, 1841 in Nelahozeves, a village forty miles north of Prague by the side of the river Vltava (Moldeau), the mother river of Czechoslovakia. He was the eldest of seven children; his father was a butcher, his mother a servant. His goal from an early age was to become a professional musician. He learned basic musical skills and took violin lessons from village schoolteachers. In the autumn of 1857, Dvořák was admitted to the School of Organists in Prague, with financial support from his uncle. There he became familiar with the works of Bedřich Smetana.<sup>1</sup>

Smetana (1824-1884) joined with other artists including Karel Erben (1811-1870), a pioneer in collecting folk tunes;<sup>2</sup> Božena Nemcová (1820-1862), the first Czech female novelist;<sup>3</sup> and Josef Mánes (1820-1871), a painter who advocated works that described Czech life, whose works were inspired by traditional customs.<sup>4</sup> Dvořák was an enthusiastic supporter of this view, but was himself as yet an unknown composer. He was a violinist in Provisional Theater Orchestra. He played violin in the premiere of Smetana's most famous

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<sup>1</sup> Bedřich Smetana, was a Czech composer. He is regarded as the father of music in his home country. He is best-known for symphonic poem *Má vlast*, meaning "My Homeland".

<sup>2</sup> Karel Jaromír Erben, was a Czech historian, poet. He was famous for collecting poems and songs with traditional Czech folklore.

<sup>3</sup> Božena Nemcová, was the first Czech female writer, whose representative novel was *Babička* (The Grandmother) (1855).

<sup>4</sup> Josef Mánes, was a Czech painter, many of his works depicted landscapes.

opera, *The Bartered Bride* in 1866 and in other productions to support himself. He had a performing career before he began conducting.<sup>5</sup>

In 1865, Dvořák wrote his first symphony for a competition in Germany, but received no reply to his entry.<sup>6</sup> He composed other symphonies and several chamber works without drawing any attention. Dvořák's opera, *Alfred the Great* (1870), drew the notice of a few people.<sup>7</sup> His situation began to change markedly in the 1870s, when his compositions, a Symphony in E-flat major and other works were submitted to the Austrian State Prize for composition in 1874 and drew the attention of Johannes Brahms, who was among the panel of judges. He won the competition and was given a State award by the Austrian government with Brahms's financial support. Later Brahms recommended Dvořák to his own publisher, Fritz Simrock, in Berlin.

Simrock commissioned Dvořák to write a set of *Slavonic Dances*. These eight dances, Op.46, achieved immediate success. They were first written for piano duet in 1878, and orchestrated soon after by the composer himself, achieving even greater popularity. He composed another set of eight *Slavonic Dances*, Op.72 eight years later. Dvořák's passionate love of Czech folk music was the inspiration for many works such as the *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, Op.45 and the *Czech Suite*, Op.39. In the late 1870s, his *Violin Concerto in A minor*, Op.53 and the seven *Gypsy Songs*, Op.55 gained lasting popularity. Dvořák achieved international recognition around 1880.

With his works reached to British people through performances and publication,

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<sup>5</sup> Percy M. Young, *Master of Music: Dvořák*. (Ernest Benn Limited: London, 1970), 23-24.

<sup>6</sup> The manuscript of this work was found twenty years after the composer had died and the first performance was given in 1936.

<sup>7</sup> *Alfred*, is a heroic opera in three acts composed by Dvořák, which was his first opera and never played during his life time.

Dvořák was invited to visit England twice in 1884.<sup>8</sup> In 1891, he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree of music from the University of Cambridge. There he conducted his own *Symphony in D Major* and *Stabat Mater*, which enjoyed enormous success. Edward Elgar (1857-1934), who played the violin in the orchestra, was deeply impressed.<sup>9</sup> He wrote: “I wish you could hear Dvořák’s music. It is simply ravishing, so tuneful and clever and the orchestration is wonderful. No matter how few instruments he uses it never sounds thin. I cannot describe it, it must be heard.”<sup>10</sup> Five years later, he made his last trip to England for the performance of his *Cello concerto in B minor*, Op.104 played by Leo Stern.<sup>11</sup>

After Smetana died in 1884, Dvořák was widely regarded as the leading Czech composer. In 1891, he became a composition professor at the Prague Conservatory. Among his students were Josef Suk (1874-1935) and Vítězslav Novák (1870-1949), both of whom became important proponents of Czech musical nationalism. In 1889, he toured to Dresden, Berlin, and Hamburg in Germany, and to Russia in 1890 with performances of his own works.

From 1892-1895 Dvořák taught composition at the National Conservatory of Music in New York. This non-profit school was founded by Mrs. Jeanette Thurber in 1885, and was open to students from different racial backgrounds. Mrs. Thurber had invited him to come to the U.S. several times; he ultimately accepted in order to learn more about America and its music. While in the U.S. he wrote compositions inspired by the beauty of American scenery that incorporated elements of African-American and Indian music. Dvořák composed one of his most famous works, *Symphony in E minor “From the New World”*, Op.95 from

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<sup>8</sup> Neil Butterworth, *Dvořák: his life and times*. (Midas Books: Great Britain, 1980), 51-57.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Elgar, was an English composer. His most famous works includes *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op.61, and *Cello Concerto in E minor*, Op.85.

<sup>10</sup> Percy M. Young, *Master of Music: Dvořák*. (Ernest Benn Limited: London, 1970), 49.

<sup>11</sup> Leo Stern (1862-1904) was an English cellist, most remembered by the premiere performance of *Cello Concerto in B minor* Op. 104 composed by Antonín Dvořák in London in 1896.

1892-1893 while staying in the United States. He visited Czech communities in Spillville, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska. One of his American students, Rubin Goldmark (1872-1936), became the director of the Julliard Graduate School, and taught George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Aaron Copland (1900-1990).<sup>12 13</sup> Dvořák's *Cello Concerto in B minor*, Op.104 was composed during his second visit to the U.S. in 1894-95.

In later years he moved back to Prague with occasional travel abroad. There Dvořák composed several operas including one of his most popular works, *Rusalka*, a fairy-tale opera, full of tuneful melodies and magical color depicting nature.

Dvořák had relatively good health all his life, but suffered an attack of influenza on April 1904 and died on May 1 after five weeks of illness. Dvořák was buried in the Vyšehrad Cemetery, the burial site of many other distinguished Czech artists such as Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) and Božena Nemcová (1820-1862).<sup>14</sup>

## **Part II Musical Styles and works**

Czechoslovakia was a country only existed from October 1918. It merged the parts of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, were the three historical Czech territories, while Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia were located in mountain regions. On January 1, 1993, the country was separated into two

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<sup>12</sup> George Gershwin, was an American composer. His compositions covered both classical and popular styles, in which one of the representative works is *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924).

<sup>13</sup> Aaron Copland, was an American composer. *Appalachian Spring* (1943-44) is one of his best-known orchestral works. Twelve-tone techniques was applied to some of his compositions.

<sup>14</sup> Gervase Hughes, *Dvořák: His Life & Music*. (Cassell: London, 1967), 213-216.

independent countries: the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia.<sup>15</sup>

Located in the center of Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Western Europe, the Czech have always shared a mix of different cultures. Czech musicians and composers have often been influenced by folk music of different origins. Bohemia, a region located in Western Europe, was where the polka originated. The Bohemian polka, a dance in duple time became popular worldwide starting from nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Other folk influences came from Silesia, a region in the northeast section of the modern Czech Republic. This region shares cultural links with Moravian and Czech culture through wedding and seasonal traditions. The instrumental tradition mainly developed from family groups with performers playing in different parts with Silesian bagpipes, flutes, or whistle in instrumental ensembles.<sup>17</sup> Moravia is primarily in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. Moravian folk music displays the influences of several types of folk music from different countries: Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland. Styles of Moravian traditional music vary by location and subject. Western Moravian music is closely related to the music of Bohemia, which was influenced by the folk music of Germany and other western regions, with music often written in major keys; southeastern Moravian music is closely related to the musical style of Eastern Europe using minor keys and melodic elements characteristic of eastern countries containing tritone. In the region of Bohemia bagpipes are common.<sup>18</sup> Moravian traditional music is best known for the

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<sup>15</sup> John Clapham, Jan Smaczny, "Czech Republic," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit)

<sup>16</sup> L. Tyllner, Karel Vetterl, "Czech Republic, Traditional Music, Bohemia" in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=1&\\_start=1#S40479.2.1](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#S40479.2.1)

<sup>17</sup> Anna Czekanowska, *Polish Folk Music: Slavonic Heritage-Polish Tradition-Contemporary Trends*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), 73-76.

<sup>18</sup> Marta Toncrová, Oskár Elschek, "Czech Republic, Traditional Music, Moravia and Silesia" in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit)

cimbalom,<sup>19</sup> which is played in ensembles that also included double bass, clarinet and violins. Traditional folk songs are separated into various specific types suited to different occasions and activities such as love songs, pastoral songs, wedding songs, harvest songs, and ceremonial songs.<sup>20</sup>

Czech tradition was often overshadowed by German and Italian productions, which were performed frequently in important theaters. As a Czech musician, Antonín Dvořák played an important role in reviving and preserving Czech national music by taking his elder contemporary Bedřich Smetana as model. He joined in the struggle of Slavonic culture challenging the dominance of Austro-German, Italian and French culture in Europe. The first public theater was opened in Prague in 1737. In later years it became a center for the musical performance of national production by Dvořák along with others of his generation.

Dvořák came from peasant origins, thus growing up around a rich and living tradition of folk songs and dances. He combined these elements with his own musical ideas into an individual style of his own. His music expressed his love of his country and its people, with hope for the future. Dvořák's music gives an impression of a purely rustic and lively personality with an extraordinarily vigorous spirit. Audiences are often profoundly moved by his musical expression with its direct expression of sadness and happiness.

His works cover almost every form of composition, including chamber music, symphony, concerto, opera, religious works, vocal music, and instrumental music. His

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<sup>19</sup> Cimbalom, is a type of big dulcimer, an instrument widely used in areas like Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine in Europe.

<sup>20</sup> Marta Toncrová, Oskár Elschek, "Czech Republic, Traditional Music, Moravia and Silesia" in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=1&\\_start=1#S40479.2.2](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40479?q=czech+republic+&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#S40479.2.2)

*Symphony in E minor "From the New World"*, Op.95, 1893, is surely one of his most representative and well-known works and is played worldwide. He composed a set of cycle *Gypsy Songs*, Op.55, 1880, from which the fourth of seven songs, "Songs My Mother Taught me" has become extremely popular in transcription for different combinations of instruments.<sup>21</sup> Dvořák reflected his deep sorrow on the recent death of his baby daughter in his setting of *Stabat Mater*, Op.58, 1876-7, in which the text was taken from a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic hymn to Mary. He composed his *Violin Concerto in A minor*, Op.53, 1879-80, which was dedicated to violinist Joseph Joachim<sup>22</sup> (1831-1907) and his *Cello Concerto in B minor*, Op.104, 1894-95, the last work that Dvořák completed during his return visit to the United States. The latter is another highly technically demanding work, reflecting his homesickness for his home country by using characteristic Czech folk melodies and rhythms.<sup>23</sup> In the category of chamber music, he composed his *Piano Quintet in A major*, Op.81, in 1887, which is representative of his musical style: a cheerful and energetic first movement; a melancholy and sweet second movement; a fiery third movement in the style of furiant (a fast dance in 3/4 time with frequently changed accents); and a fine Finale speaks with unique musical beauty. His solo piano music is less played, but he made important contributions in writing for piano duet, in his two sets of *Slavonic Dances* Op.46 and Op.72, composed for piano, four-hands. These brought him international fame, both in the original duet form and the later orchestral arrangements. The two sets of dances show his individual style, characterized by exuberant spirits and varied folk idioms.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Otakar Sourek, *Antonín Dvořák and His Works*. (Artia: Prague, 1956), 55.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Joachim, was a celebrated Hungarian violinist. He is a close friend with Johannes Brahms.

<sup>23</sup> Otakar Sourek, *Antonín Dvořák and His Works*. (Artia: Prague, 1956), 34-36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 27-29.



### Part III Slavonic Dances Op.46

*Moravian Duets*, Op.32, composed by Antonín Dvořák in 1876, is a collection of fourteen pieces for vocal duet from folk song sources. Brahms was impressed by this work, which was submitted by Dvořák as part of his works entered in the Austrian state scholarship competition. Brahms sent a copy of the work to his Berlin music publisher Fritz Simrock, along with a letter of recommendation. This established Dvořák's connection with the major publishing company in Berlin that would help his future development and build his reputation beyond the borders of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>25</sup>

Antonín Dvořák soon received a request from Simrock, asking him to write Bohemian dances, in the manner of Brahms's Hungarian Dances, which were extremely popular among amateur pianists in Europe. In a letter of March 6, 1878 Simrock wrote: "write the dances using whatever original national melodies you see fit, nourished by and thus united with your own powers of invention."<sup>26</sup> In another letter, Simrock said: "you may even call them 'Slavonic Dances' --the term is richer and more expansive (rather than Moravian dances or Bohemian dances); and don't go about them in a rush, but seek quite pretty, unforgettable melodies. Surely you will discover such melodies in Slavonic culture, and in yourself."<sup>27</sup>

Characteristic Slovak dance patterns shine through each piece, but they are combined with Dvořák's personal invention. Dvořák did not present the folk music in its original form, but rather used folk music as the source of rhythms and melodic ideas as an expressive element.

The first set of eight *Slavonic Dances*, Op.46 met the demands of a broad public for

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<sup>25</sup> Gervase Hughes, *Dvořák: His Life & Music*. (Cassell: London, 1967), 67-69.

<sup>26</sup> Antonín Dvořák, *Slavonic Dances for Piano Duet, op.46* (Bärenreiter: Praha, 2013), VI.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*,

novelty, originality, and a folk-like nature. Moreover, the relatively easy technical difficulties fit the capabilities of amateur players. They are still popular today. This composition is full of contrast with richly varied combinations of motives and harmony, especially its distinctive rhythm borrowed and developed from folk models of dance types, including furiant (triple-time dances with hemiola), dumka (dances with contrasting sections between slow and fast, sad and fiery), polka (duple-time dances), sousedská (triple-time dances in a calm and smooth features), and skočná (duple-time dances in a rapid tempo).

The order of the first set of *Slavonic Dances*, Op.46 in modern editions is identical to that found in the composer's sketches and in the autograph manuscript score. Simrock interchanged the position of No.3 (polka) and No.6 (sousedská). The third dance in A-flat major in Dvořák's manuscript became the sixth in the first edition by Simrock and the dance in D major, originally the sixth dance in the manuscript, occupied the third place in the print. This inversion broke the cyclic balance of the entire set, both in its tempo scheme, and in its design of orders of dance types: furiant, dumka, polka, sousedská, skočná, sousedská, skočná, furiant. Dvořák restored the original order of the pieces in his orchestral version.

*Slavonic Dances*, Op.46 (1878)

1. C major, Presto (furiant)
2. E minor, Allegretto scherzando, Allegro vivo (dumka)
3. A flat major, Poco allegro, Piu mosso (polka)
4. F major, Tempo di Menuetto (sousedská)
5. A major, Allegro vivace (skočná)

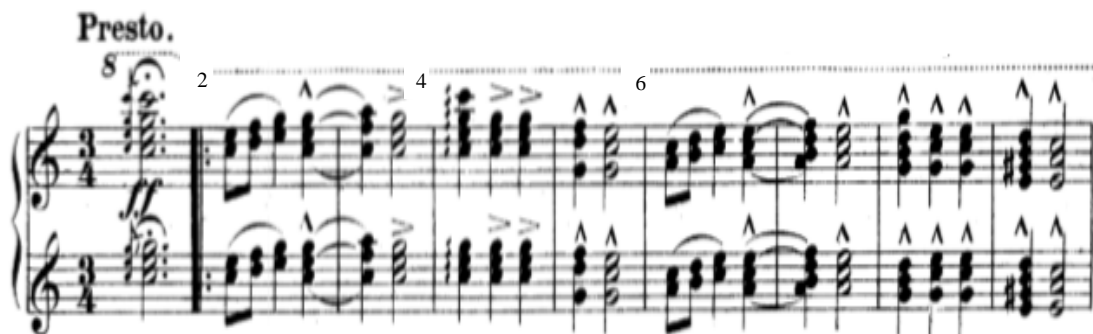
6. D major, Allegretto scherzando (sousedská)

7. C minor, Allegro assai (skočná)

8. G minor, Presto (furiant)

Dances No.1 and No.8 in C major and G minor are in the style of furiant, which is a typical Bohemian dance in triple meter with hemiolas,<sup>28</sup> shifted accents create a feeling of alternating between duple time and triple time. It is sometimes describe as a “stamping” dance due to its fiery tempo as well as a pattern of frequently accented downbeats. (Examples 1-2 and Examples 3-4)

Example 1. Dvořák, Op.46 No.1, mm. 1-9, primo part:



Example 2. Dvořák, Op.46 No.1, mm. 1-9, secondo part:



In both parts (Example 1 and Example 2), measures 2-3 and 6-7 are grouped in two

<sup>28</sup> Hemiola, a musical term to describe the rhythmic grouping can be divided into either two or three.

while measure 4-5 and 8-9 are grouped in three.

Example 3. Dvořák, Op.46 No.8, mm. 1-8, primo part:



Example 4. Dvořák, Op.46 No.8, mm. 1-8, secondo part:



In both parts (Example 3 and Example 4), measures 1-2 and 5-6 can be viewed as 2 + 2 + 2, while measures 3-4 and 7-8 are as 3 + 3.

Dance No.2 in E minor is in the style of a dumka. The term literally means “thoughts and memory.” The dumka form originated in Ukraine. It alternates between sad, dreamy and fiery sections. It is a folk dance half melancholy and half happy in its contrast between tempo and keys that reflect the changes of color and mood. It can be written in duple meter as well

as in triple meter. We can clearly see the sudden change in tempos and keys from two passages from this dance. (Example 5 and Example 6)

Example 5. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 1-9, first section, primo part:

*Allegretto scherzando.*

E minor

Example 6. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 18-25, second section, primo part:

*Allegro vivo*

D major

The beginning slower section (Example 5) is in E minor, the contrasting section (Example 6) is in dominant of the relative major (G major) of the first section, a vivid contrast.

Dance No. 3 in A flat major is a polka. It is a Bohemian dance, which originated in the middle of nineteenth century from peasant origins. It is still popular today, being played and performed in the areas of Europe in countries like Poland, Czech, Hungary, Romania, and Croatia. The term “polka” also means “half-step” in Czech, which indicates that the movement of the dance type is to step gently from one foot to the other.<sup>29</sup> We find the typical polka is in duple time with lively energy. Polkas are danced in pairs, the two performers are either in face-to-face waltz position or standing side by side. In this piece, we can hear the back and forth alternation between verses of gentle and festive characteristics. (Example 7 and Example 8)

Example 7. Dvořák, Op.46 No.3, mm. 1-10, first section, primo part:



Example 8. Dvořák, Op.46 No.3, mm. 29-36, second section, primo part:

<sup>29</sup> Gracian Černušák, et al, “Polka,” in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22020?q=polka+&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22020?q=polka+&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit)



Dances No.4 and No.6 in F major and D major respectively refer to the sousedská.

The sousedská is a couples dance in moderately slow tempo, normally in 3/4 time. The typical mood is gentle, calm and sweet (Example 9 and Example 10). This type of dance is widely used by Bohemian composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Josef Suk.<sup>30</sup>

Example 9. Dvořák, Op.46 No.4, mm. 1-8, primo part:



<sup>30</sup> Josef Suk (1874-1935), was a Czech composer and violinist, who was known as one of Antonín Dvořák's favorite student He married Dvořák's daughter, Otilie.

Allegretto scherzando

1

2

4

1

2 3 2 1

2

4

1

2 3 2 1

2

4

3

2

1

*p*

*f*

2

9

1

2

3

1

2

*p*

2

1

3

Example 11. Dvořák, Op.46 No.5, mm. 1-8, ascending passage, primo part:

Allegro vivace

1

*p*

8



Example 12. Dvořák, Op.46 No.5, mm. 9-16, descending passage, primo part:

Example 12 shows a descending passage in the primo part of Dvořák's Op.46 No.5, measures 9-16. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first system (measures 9-14) features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand, starting on G5 and ending on G4. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The second system (measures 15-16) continues the descending scale, ending on G3. The tempo is marked *p* (piano) and the dynamics include *dim.* (diminuendo).

Example 13. Dvořák, Op.46 No.7, mm. 1-18, primo part:

Example 13 shows the first 18 measures of the primo part of Dvořák's Op.46 No.7. The score is in B-flat major (two flats) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked *Allegro assai*. The first system (measures 1-8) features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand, starting on B-flat5 and ending on B-flat4. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The second system (measures 9-18) continues the descending scale, ending on B-flat3. The tempo is marked *p poco rit.* (piano, a little ritardando) and the dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte), *f* (forte), and *pp* (pianissimo).

The shape is a long descent with repeats of each two-measure motive, a major part of the design in this movement (Example 13).

This set of dances depicts rustic life and enjoyment. The music is based on folk dances rhythms and filled with vigorous spirit. The secondo part usually plays a supporting role to the primo, giving a basic rhythmic background. The primo part contains the main motives. Sometimes the secondo echoes the motive that is presented in the primo by applying contrapuntal techniques (see below). The phrase structure of each dance is comparatively “square”, the phrases often eight measures in length. There is much motivic repetition supported by varied harmonies, rhythmic variations and frequent modulations. Syncopated rhythm is applied often in the dances of furiant, polka, sousedská.<sup>31</sup> There are several specific harmonic and melodic devices seen normally in folk dances, as follows:

- ◆ Quick alternation between major and minor keys.

Example 14. Dvořák, Op.46 No.5, mm. 143-152, primo part:

The passage (see above) from bars 143 to 147 is in D minor switches to F major from bars 148 to 152.

Another example, which demonstrates a sudden key change between major and minor,

<sup>31</sup> Klaus Döge, “Antonín Dvořák, Artistic Character,” in *Grove Music Online*, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51222?q=Dvorak+&search=quick&pos=1&\\_st art=1#S51222.8](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51222?q=Dvorak+&search=quick&pos=1&_st art=1#S51222.8)

is the dance No.8 (Example 3 and Example 4). We can see the first half of the theme from bars 1 to 4 is in G minor, contrasting with the second half in G major from bars 5 to 8.

◆ Melodies are doubled in thirds.

This feature is clearly shown in both hands in the primo part from dance No.1 from bar 39 (Example 15), and in left hand from bar 99 (Example 16):

Example 15. Dvořák, Op.46 No.1, mm. 39-43, primo part:



Example 16. Dvořák, Op.46 No.1, mm. 99-106, primo part:



Dance No.4 also shows both hands doubling thirds in different passages (Example 17 and Example 18):

Example 17. Dvořák, Op.46 No.4, mm. 29-37, primo part:

Example 17 shows a musical passage from Dvořák's Op.46 No.4, measures 29-37, primo part. The score is in 3/4 time and features two systems of music. The first system (mm. 29-34) shows both hands doubling thirds. The second system (mm. 35-37) continues this pattern. Dynamics include *mf in tempo*, *f*, *p*, *dim.*, *pp*, and *cresc.* Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes.

Example 18. Dvořák, Op.46 No.4, mm. 104-108, primo part:

Example 18 shows a musical passage from Dvořák's Op.46 No.4, measures 104-108, primo part. The score is in 3/4 time and features two systems of music. The first system (mm. 104-107) shows both hands doubling thirds. The second system (mm. 108) continues this pattern. Dynamics include *fz*, *staccato*, *fz*, *fz*, *f*, and *V*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes.

◆ Contrapuntal technique

The main melodic motive is often first stated in the primo and then imitated in the secondo. (Example 19 and Example 20)

Example 19. Dvořák, Op.46 No.7, mm. 35-48, primo part:

This musical score for the primo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 7, measures 35-48, is written for piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 35 to 41, and the second system covers measures 42 to 48. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked 'ff' (fortissimo) at the beginning and 'fz' (forzando) at measures 39 and 43. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The melody is primarily in the right hand, with the left hand providing harmonic support. The piece concludes with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking and a fermata over the final measure.

Example 20. Dvořák, Op.46 No.7, mm. 35-48, secondo part:

This musical score for the secondo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 7, measures 35-48, is written for piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 35 to 41, and the second system covers measures 42 to 48. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked 'ff' (fortissimo) at the beginning and 'fz' (forzando) at measures 39 and 43. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The melody is primarily in the right hand, with the left hand providing harmonic support. The piece concludes with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking and a fermata over the final measure.

We can see that the right hand in the secondo part (Example 20) restates the motif one beat after the doubled motive presented by both hands in primo part (Example 19).

Example 21. Dvořák, Op.46 No.4, mm. 17-28, primo part:

Example 21 shows the first system of the musical score for measures 17-28. The score is written for a single staff (treble clef) and includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *dimin.*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and *cresc.*. The melody is first stated in measure 17. The second system covers measures 20-25, and the third system covers measures 26-28, ending with a *rit.* and *dim.* marking.

Example 22. Dvořák, Op.46 No.4, mm. 17-28, secondo part:

Example 22 shows the second system of the musical score for measures 17-28. The score is written for a single staff (bass clef) and includes dynamic markings such as *dimin.*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*, *cresc.*, and *f*. The melody is first stated in measure 17. The second system covers measures 21-26, and the third system covers measures 27-28, ending with a *p rit.* marking.

In this case (Example 21 and Example 22), the melody is again first stated in the primo part with a one bar difference between its imitation in the secondo.

- ◆ Each part takes turns playing the melody.

Example 23. Dvořák, Op.46 No.6, mm. 51-74, primo part:

This musical score for the primo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 6, measures 51-74, is written for piano. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system (measures 51-58) features a melody in the right hand with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system (measures 59-66) shows the melody in the left hand with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo (*dim.*) and a final piano (*p*) measure. The third system (measures 67-73) has the melody in the right hand, starting with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and ending with a forte (*fz*) crescendo. The fourth system (measure 74) shows a final chordal texture.

Example 24. Dvořák, Op.46 No.6, mm. 51-74, secondo part:

This musical score for the secondo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 6, measures 51-74, is written for piano. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 51-58) features a melody in the right hand with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo (*dim.*). The second system (measures 59-66) shows the melody in the left hand with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo (*dim.*) and a final piano (*p*) measure. The third system (measures 67-74) has the melody in the right hand, starting with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and ending with a crescendo (*crescendo*).

In bars 51-58 (Example 23), the primo plays the melody while the secondo performs the accompaniment figure. In bars 59-66 (Example 24), both parts switch with the secondo taking over the melody. The melody is passed to primo again from bars 67-74 (Example 23) with support by the secondo.

Example 25. Dvořák, Op.46 No.7, mm. 136-166, primo part:

136

141

148

155

158

163



Example 26. Dvořák, Op.46 No.7, mm. 136-166, secondo part:

The musical score is divided into seven systems, each with a measure number at the beginning:

- System 1 (Measures 136-140):** The right hand begins with a melodic line starting on G4, marked *fp*. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Measure 136 includes fingerings: 5 4 3 1 for the right hand and 5 2 1 3 for the left hand.
- System 2 (Measures 141-145):** The right hand continues the melodic line, marked *ff*. Measure 141 includes fingerings: 5 2 4 1 3 1 for the right hand and 5 2 4 1 3 1 for the left hand.
- System 3 (Measures 146-150):** The right hand features a series of eighth-note patterns, marked *ff*. Measure 146 includes fingerings: 1 2 4 for the right hand and 1 2 3 for the left hand.
- System 4 (Measures 151-155):** The right hand continues the eighth-note patterns, marked *ff*. Measure 151 includes fingerings: 1 2 for the right hand and 1 2 for the left hand.
- System 5 (Measures 156-160):** The right hand features a series of eighth-note patterns, marked *ff*. Measure 156 includes fingerings: 3 1 2 4 for the right hand and 3 2 1 4 for the left hand.
- System 6 (Measures 161-165):** The right hand continues the eighth-note patterns, marked *ff*. Measure 161 includes fingerings: 1 2 4 for the right hand and 1 2 3 1 2 4 for the left hand.
- System 7 (Measures 166-170):** The right hand features a series of eighth-note patterns, marked *ff*. Measure 166 includes fingerings: 1 2 4 for the right hand and 1 2 3 1 2 4 for the left hand.

In this section, the melody from bars 136-143 and bars 155-158 is played by the secondo part (Example 26), alternating with the primo from bars 144-154 and bars 159-166 (Example 25).

## **Chapter II Piano Duet and Pedagogical Study**

### **Part I Historical Background**

Harpsichord and clavichord were the major keyboard instruments used throughout the seventeenth century before the introduction of the piano around the beginning of the eighteenth century. Compositions featuring two performers playing at one keyboard were not common until the piano became dominant in the late eighteenth century, possibly due to limitations in the size of the keyboard. Duet playing was not primarily for the concert stage, but was intended for home music making. It was aimed primarily for the relaxation and entertainment of the middle class. It is an intimate style of ensemble performance. The main history of the piano duet began with Mozart and a few of his contemporaries. The sons of J.S Bach, apart from J.C Bach, were more interested in writing music for two keyboards than duets for one instrument.<sup>32</sup>

The technological development of the piano in the nineteenth century allowed for increases of volume and expression, which greatly increased the dynamic range and power as well as the size of the keyboard instrument. This provided an overall increase of sonority, which is reflected in four-hand music.<sup>33</sup> In the nineteenth century, the custom of four-hand playing was so widespread that almost every major symphonic or operatic work was published in a version for piano duet, either arranged by composers themselves or by other editors.<sup>34</sup> These arrangements were convenient ways for both amateurs and professional

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<sup>32</sup> Ernest Lubin, *The Piano Duet: A Guide for Pianists*. (Da Capo Press Inc: New York, 1976), 1-4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 5-7.

<sup>34</sup> For more information:

1. Thomas Christensen, "Four-hand Piano Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-century Musical Reception," in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 52, No.2 (Summer 1999), pp. 255-98,

musicians to be connected with masterworks in various forms. The fashion of arrangement for the piano duet gradually declined as audiences had the chance to hear these works in other ways after the introduction of the radio and phonograph.

## Part II Stylistic Features

Piano duets are not as virtuosic in style, overall, as works from the solo piano or two-piano literature. Playing duets develops a pianist's ensemble skills and overall musicianship, as well as giving an occasion to enjoy the companionship of another partner and their musical input.

One advantage of the piano duet is that it provides an opportunity to hear the music of different composers and styles not normally played on the piano, including orchestral works, chamber music, and works originally written for other instruments. Many composers arranged their own compositions for piano duet into orchestration versions, which in some cases possibly overshadowed the original forms. For example, a set of Sixteen Waltzes Op.39, composed by Brahms were originally written for piano duet, but is often heard in its orchestral form. Dvořák's two sets of *Slavonic Dances* are also heard often in the orchestral versions. Antonín Dvořák's four-hands compositions are among the best in the piano duet repertory and rank with those of Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms. Dvořák arranged a number of his four-hands compositions for orchestra including *Legends*, Op.59, and *From the Bohemian Forest*, Op.68.<sup>35</sup>

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University of California Press, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/831999>

2. Jonathan Gregor, "Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription," in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 2007), pp. 195-236, University of California Press, accessed December 16, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2007.24.2.195>

<sup>35</sup> Ernest Lubin, *The Piano Duet: A Guide for Pianists*. (Da Capo Press Inc: New York, 1976), 132-133.

### Part III Pedagogical Points

Piano duet playing is a good way to develop musicianship skills. It's important to learn to listen to one's partner as well as oneself, aiming for a blend of sound and to read quickly, improving sight-reading skills. Depending on the context and design, each part may need to be projected at different spots, or both may have equal importance.<sup>36</sup> I will give some examples from *Slavonic Dances*. As I discussed in previous chapter, the primo part often introduces the melody, while the secondo part imitates the whole passage exactly or with a slightly varied figure in different registers (Example 27 and Example 28).

Example 27. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 18-33, primo part:

The image shows a musical score for the primo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 2, measures 18-33. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivo.' The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a piano (p) dynamic at the start, a crescendo (cresc.) marking, and a forte (f) dynamic. The music is written for the right hand (primo) and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Duets: from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for One and Two Pianos*. (Oxford University Press Inc: New York, 1995), 33.

Example 28. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 18-33, secondo part:

The musical score for the second part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 2, measures 18-33, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 18-19) is marked 'Allegro vivo' and 'p'. The second system (measures 20-25) includes a 'cresc.' marking and a 'ff' dynamic. The third system (measures 26-33) continues the 'ff' dynamic. The score is written for a single piano part, with the right hand playing the melody and the left hand providing the accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4.

In bars 18-25 and 26-33 the primo and secondo each play a melody in turn with a different accompaniment figure. The melody is treated in different register by the two parts as well, with a heavier sound projected an octave lower by the secondo, perhaps suggesting a group of male dancers interacting with a group of female dancers.

Performers need to plan well how to present the piece to make it interesting and attractive. In general, the melody is supposed to sing out in any style of music, but it may vary in degree. In *Slavonic Dances*, repetition of motives appears throughout each single piece and the whole set. Performers need to carefully plan the presentation of similar motives by changing dynamics, tempo, and emphasis of certain voices or texture (Examples 29-30 and Examples 31-32).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 30-32.

Example 29. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 54-61, primo part:

Example 29 shows the first system of music for measures 54-61. The tempo is marked *Tempo I<sup>o</sup>* with a common time signature. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first system covers measures 54 to 59. The right hand (treble clef) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The left hand (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The second system covers measures 60 and 61, ending with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5 above the notes.

Example 30. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 54-61, secondo part:

Example 30 shows the second system of music for measures 54-59. The tempo is marked *Tempo I.*. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first system covers measures 54 to 58. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line with chords and moving lines. The left hand (bass clef) features a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *poco ritard.* (poco ritardando), *dimin.* (diminuendo), and *p* (piano). The second system covers measures 59 and 60, ending with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5 above the notes.

Example 31. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 120-127, primo part:

120 *Allegretto quasi Tempo I.*

*pp*

*crescendo*

126

*ritard.*

Detailed description: This musical score for the primo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 2, measures 120-127, is written for two staves in G major. Measures 120-125 are marked 'Allegretto quasi Tempo I.' and 'pp'. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment of eighth notes. A 'crescendo' marking is placed over measures 124-125. Measures 126-127 are marked 'ritard.' and show the final notes of the passage.

Example 32. Dvořák, Op.46 No.2, mm. 120-127, secondo part:

120 *Allegretto, quasi Tempo I<sup>o</sup>*

*p a tempo*

*cresc.*

126

*rit.*

Detailed description: This musical score for the secondo part of Dvořák's Op. 46 No. 2, measures 120-127, is written for two staves in G major. Measures 120-125 are marked 'Allegretto, quasi Tempo I<sup>o</sup>' and 'p a tempo'. The melody in the right hand is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes, with some triplets. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. A 'cresc.' marking is placed over measures 124-125. Measures 126-127 are marked 'rit.' and show the final notes of the passage.

Although the melody is similar in these two passages, the overall effect is different because of the different supporting material. The melody from bars 54-61 (Examples 29-30) played by the primo part has a thicker texture created by both hands doubling the melody with inner voices, compared to bars 120-127 (Examples 31-32), in which the melody is primarily presented by the left hand of the primo part with a secondary voice in its right hand.



Pedaling is another issue in piano duet performance. Who handles the pedal is normally determined by which pianist can pedal more easily based on musical content and physical positioning at the piano. It can be the one who has better control of the foot. One general rule is that the person who has the most important musical role should control the pedal. The player with the primo part can pedal with his or her left foot, and the player with secondo part can use his or her right foot. The two partners need to experiment to find the proper solution during practice.

From educational point of view, we value the piano duet as part of ensemble teaching. The advantage is that teacher can join the student to play on the same keyboard, which will bring a wider musical experience than solo performance alone. There are collections that are designed for the student's part to be easier than the teacher's; others are about the same level of difficulty for both parts.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Some piano duet material for beginners are available at: Ernest Lubin, *The Piano Duet: A Guide for Pianists*. (Da Capo Press Inc: New York, 1976), 205-207.

## Conclusion

*Slavonic Dances*, Op.46 composed by Antonín Dvořák comprises eight pieces featuring stylistic writing in each movement using models from Czech folk idiom, a set full of hope and excitement. We can have a better understanding of the work by studying the elements Dvořák combines from Czech folk traditions with his own innovative musical ideas.

As one of the most important works for piano duet, this set is also a good teaching piece. It is an outstanding work that deserves to be played and heard more often in its original form.

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